

FALSE CREEK WALKING TOUR

Waterfront Redevelopment



livable city • sustainable future





What You'll See

This 1.4 km (0.87 mile) self-guided walking tour takes you along the north side of False Creek, which is really a small inlet that borders the southern edge of the downtown peninsula and opens into English Bay. The tour focuses on the evolution of the lands surrounding False Creek from industrial area to a waterfront promenade skirting residential neighbourhoods rich in parks, community centres, public art and water access. The redevelopment of False Creek demonstrates what can happen when a consultative process informs planning that envisions livability and embraces sustainability principles.

This tour can be the first leg of a bicycle ride along the entire downtown public waterfront, a two-hour trip at a moderate pace. All told, the city has 31 km (19 miles) of public ocean waterfront with walkways and bike paths, with another 8 km (5 miles) of public shore on the Fraser River. Sweeping mountain, ocean and river vistas, and numerous parks and beaches make Vancouver's waterfront one of the city's treasures.



For full Downtown map see centrefold

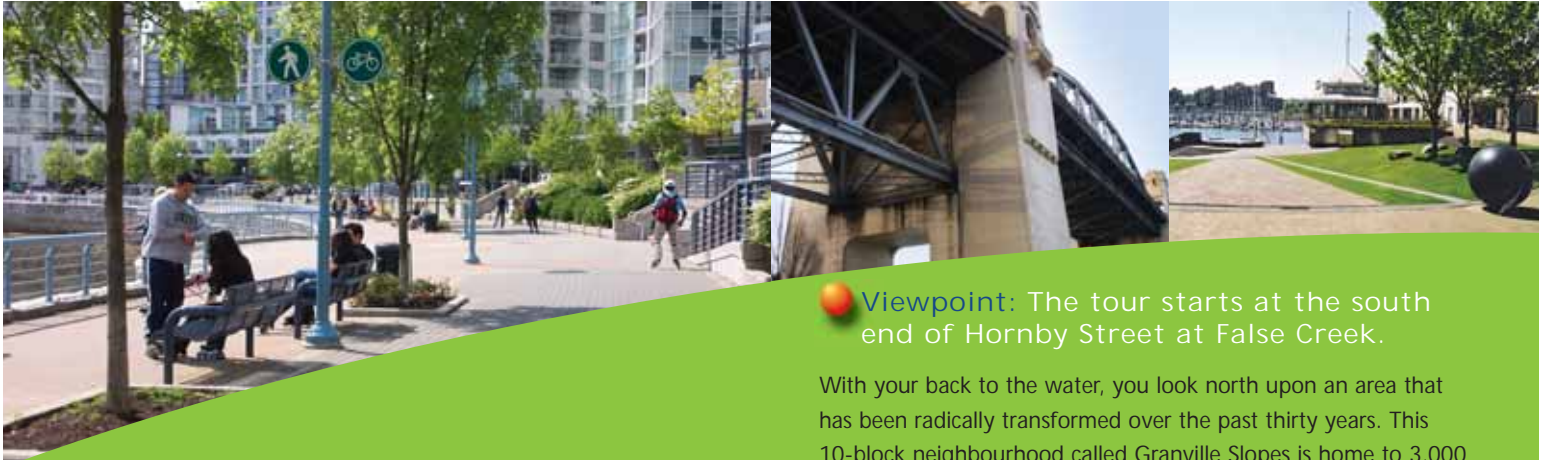
Getting Started

The tour starts at the southern tip of Hornby Street. This is a short walk from the bus stops on Burrard Street and either side of Granville Street. It is also close to a pedestrian ferry stop connecting with many points along the Creek, including Granville Island.

From Industry to Community

False Creek's original industrial character was set when the Canadian Pacific Railway located freight yards and repair shops along its north shore in the 1880s. Other industries soon followed. Sawmill and lumber operations, shipbuilding, and other heavy industry lined False Creek until the 1970s.

False Creek's transformation began in the 1970s, when the federal government decided to redevelop Granville Island following lengthy public debate. The City subsequently acquired much of the south shore and redeveloped it as an illustration of new forms of inner-city living.



Viewpoint: The tour starts at the south end of Hornby Street at False Creek.

On the north shore, the railway operations and allied industries were cleared for Expo 86, the 1986 World's Fair. After Expo, the provincial government sold the 70-hectare (175-acre) site to a private developer. The City and the developer, Concord Pacific, started a cooperative planning process for redeveloping the north shore of False Creek. Thousands took part in the process to develop a vision for the area. In providing development rights for a high density, primarily residential neighbourhood, the City negotiated a full array of public amenities. These include parks, community centres, schools and social housing,

With your back to the water, you look north upon an area that has been radically transformed over the past thirty years. This 10-block neighbourhood called Granville Slopes is home to 3,000 residents and was an early testing ground for many of the urban design ideas that helped shape later high-rise neighbourhoods. These included making the waterfront public, extending the city street grid to the water's edge, lining streets with townhouses to create a pedestrian friendly public realm, and adding further density with slim towers.

The bridge to your right as you face the water is Burrard Bridge, built in 1932 to the designs of architect G.L. Thorton Sharp. "Both central piers," said Sharp, "were designed and connected with an overhead gallery across the road. This helped to mask the network of steel in the truss from the two approaches, and has been treated as an entrance gateway to the city."

Looking south across the Creek, you see Granville Island. Originally an industrial site created on a mud bank in 1917, it was redeveloped in the late 1970s by the federal government's Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Today, the 15-hectare (37-acre) site is a thriving, award-winning urban mecca that integrates shopping, culture and recreation with continuing industrial use. A visit is well worth the short ferry ride.



Note: The City's waterfront policy in the 1970s and 1980s recommended balancing cut and fill along the existing shoreline to stabilize the shore and maintain irregular alignments, as well as to maintain the sense of False Creek as a large body of water. The 1987 shoreline became the base for determining the balance between cut and fill. The shoreline treatment of both the north and south banks of False Creek show the balance achieved.

all linked by a continuous waterfront promenade. The redevelopment of False Creek embodies several sustainability principles, including reclamation of a brownfield site, provision of housing close to jobs, water quality improvement, and social diversity.

Organizing Principles for False Creek North (False Creek North Official Development Plan, 1990)

- Integrate with the City
- Build on the setting
- Maintain the sense of a substantial water basin
- Use streets as an organizing device
- Create lively places having strong imageability
- Create neighbourhoods
- Plan for all age groups with a particular emphasis on children



Wayfinding: Follow the waterfront walkway under the Granville Street Bridge, turn north (left) and walk up Granville Street (under the bridge) to Beach Crescent. Turn right onto Beach Crescent, head down to the waterfront walkway and continue walking.

The City envisions relocating industrial services currently underneath the 1950s Granville Street Bridge to allow for a cluster of neighbourhood shops and services to serve the surrounding residential community. As you make your way underneath the bridge, the landscape changes again with the start of the former Expo lands that Concord Pacific has been redeveloping. The immense site has a series of six neighbourhood clusters. When complete, they will be home to approximately 16,000 people living in 9,200 units. Public amenities will include two elementary schools, four daycare centres, a full-service community centre, a public art program, 17 hectares (42 acres) of parks, and a continuous public waterfront walkway.

 **Viewpoint:** George Wainborn Park (South foot of Richards St.)

Named after Vancouver's longest serving Park Commissioner, George Wainborn, this park of 2.5 hectares (6 acres) is one of a series of large parks that the developer provided as part of an amenity package required by the City through Development Cost Levies and/or Community Amenity Contributions.

The public art piece in the centre of the walkway represents a fissure in the ground created by tectonic forces that have heaved up the ground on one side. This symbolic commentary on our regional geology illustrates how seismic forces create fault lines where continental plates collide or move apart.

Overlooking the park are several towers on townhouse bases. Facing the water, the buildings to your right closest to the water were selected by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation as a case study to investigate "Strategies for Alternative Energy Use and Redistribution at the Building Envelope." The study findings are expressed in the building's orientation, elevation, and massing.

Note: The use of townhouse bases, common throughout downtown, is an urban design tool that enables a gradual, gentle distinction between public and private realms. The low profile and engaging exterior treatments and materials of townhouses help create pedestrian-friendly spaces. They also provide "eyes on the street" and express a comfortable domesticity, making them suitable for families with children.





DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER



- | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Coal Harbour Tour | A. Canada Place | E. BC Place Stadium | I. Train Station |
| 2. Downtown Tour | B. Vancouver Art Gallery | F. Vancouver Public Library | J. Granville Island |
| 3. Downtown Eastside Tour | C. Main Post Office | G. St. Paul's Hospital | K. Vancouver Museum |
| 4. False Creek Tour | D. Queen Elizabeth Theatre | H. SeaBus | L. Stanley Park |



Viewpoint: Public Art – Marking High Tide and Waiting for Low Tide

Vancouver parks and streets are a stage for many works of public art. Don Vaughan's sculptures, "Marking High Tide and Waiting for Low Tide," celebrate and focus the observer's attention on the dramatic tidal differences encountered in Vancouver's harbour. For every square foot of development in all major projects, developers contribute \$0.95 to the City's Public Art Program.

Looking west away from the water, you will see a salt water pumping station, part of Vancouver's Dedicated Fire Protection System. This system was developed to provide salt water for

Note about the path: Over the past few decades, the City has required developers to maintain public access along the waterfront, thus expanding the seaside promenade that now encircles the perimeter of Vancouver's Central Area. Vancouver's most valued civic asset, the waterfront walkway features segregated paths for pedestrians and wheeled users (cyclists, in-line skaters, skateboarders). Here, the pedestrian path of interlocking pavers is distinguished from the multi-use path.

firefighting in the event that a major disaster, such as an earthquake, disables the City's conventional water supply system. Public washrooms are located here.



Viewpoint: David Lam Park

The large open area beyond the sculptures is David Lam Park, named for one of British Columbia's most popular Lieutenant Governors. This is the widest part of False Creek, where David Lam Park is mirrored on the south shore by Charleson Park. The neighbourhood of South False Creek across the water is built on land owned by the City of Vancouver, extending from Cambie Street west to Granville. Developed in the 1970s, it includes a range of market and non-market housing, providing a social mix that reflects the city's income and social composition. South shore densities of 40- to 110-units per acre were, in the 1970s, considered high density, particularly for families with children. The success of South False Creek demonstrated a market for inner-city living and paved the way for private sector redevelopment on the north shore of False Creek.

In the Concord Pacific development on the north shore of False Creek, there are several distinct precincts by design, each focused on a bay and separated by a large park. Standing with your back to the water, notice the use of materials and colouring of neighbourhoods. Look for the grey tone of the Beach Crescent neighbourhood to the west; the red bricks of the Roundhouse neighbourhood, which reflect the heritage of Yaletown's warehouses; and the striking white of Marinaside Crescent.

As you make your way to the next viewpoint, you will pass Elsie Roy Elementary – one of the few new inner city schools in North America – and a childcare centre, both negotiated as part of the developer's amenity package. Note how the children's play space is integrated with the public park space.

Wayfinding: Walk along the path beside the school to Drake Street. Cross at the crosswalk and walk toward the entrance of the Roundhouse Community Centre. Follow the path out to Davie Street and the "Heritage Yard."



Viewpoint:
Roundhouse Community Centre



Standing near the entrance to the Roundhouse Community Centre, you will see three social housing projects (seniors' housing, low-income housing, co-operative housing) carefully integrated into the community by design. Twenty per cent of all units in the Concord Pacific major development are designated for social housing, 50 per cent of which are designed for families.

The Roundhouse Community Centre is one of 23 public community centres in the City of Vancouver. These centrally located facilities serve all ages and offer a wide range of recreational and leisure opportunities including fitness, arts and crafts, dance, swimming, and child care. The Vancouver Park Board – an elected body – and local non-profit community associations operate the community centres. The Park Board is responsible for providing, preserving, and advocating for parks, open spaces, and leisure services to enhance the well being of Vancouver's individuals and communities.

Part of the 4645-sq. metre (50,000-sq. ft.) community centre is housed in the refurbished roundhouse built by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1886. As the western terminus of the CPR, the building once serviced the great steam locomotives of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A community effort saved the building from the wrecker's ball and it was restored for use as a theme pavilion during Expo 86. At the end of the World's Fair, the building was given to the City for public use.

Viewpoint: "Heritage Yard," Davie Street

The Heritage Yard open space is centred on the old steam-powered turntable that once used to move steam engines from the roundhouse. The space bridges the community and commercial realms, and is often used for public events. Adjacent to the Roundhouse Community Centre is an elegant glass pavilion housing Engine 374, the locomotive that pulled the first transcontinental train into Vancouver.

This section of Davie, with most of its retail located on one side of the street, serves as an active, pedestrian-oriented connection to the water from Pacific Boulevard, the community's local high street. Slim residential towers rise from the retail and townhouse base, and are set back to allow for a better pedestrian environment at the street level. Notice the absence of a parking lot in front of the grocery store; parking is provided underground, thereby preserving the neighbourhood scale of the street facade. Walk to the grocery store entrance to experience this sense of scale.

Wayfinding: Walk down Davie Street towards the water and stand under the sculpture.





Viewpoint: Foot of Davie Street

At the water's edge the sculpture "Street Light," by Bernie Miller and Alan Tregobov, consists of six 12-metre high bronze I-beam towers, each holding up an historic image cut into a metal plate that casts a shadow of the image onto the street.

From here, the view across False Creek to the southeast beyond the Cambie Street bridge is of the site for the Olympic Village for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The Village will form the core and first phase of a sustainable neighbourhood for 12,500 people. The neighbourhood will

Note: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a rating system for "green" or "environmentally friendly" buildings. LEED recognizes leading edge buildings that reduce both the direct and indirect environmental consequences associated with their construction, occupancy, operation, maintenance, and eventual decommissioning. Categories in the rating system include sustainable sites, water efficiency, and energy and atmosphere. LEED Canada is an adaptation of the U.S. LEED rating system, tailored specifically for Canadian climates, construction practices, and regulations. In 2004, Vancouver City Council adopted a minimum of LEED Gold for all new civic buildings greater than 500-sq. metres (5,400-sq. ft.).

have a full-service community centre with boating facility, 10 hectares (26 acres) of waterfront park, a school, and more than 600 daycare spaces. The Olympic Village at Southeast False Creek is one of the first Canadian residential neighbourhoods where the developer will strive to meet LEED Gold and Platinum design standards.

Continuing to look east, you will see a giant silver geodesic ball that is a legacy of the 1986 World's Fair, now home to a science centre and Imax theatre. The row of tall residential towers called City Gate marks the eastern end of False Creek. The City Gate development provided non-market housing, a daycare, and a payment in lieu of parks.

Side Trip: Across Pacific Boulevard is Yaletown, the former warehouse district that developed around the railway's operations. Yaletown has retained much of its heritage, including loading docks and overhead canopies, and is now a thriving mixed-use neighbourhood.

The tour ends here.

Walk up two blocks to catch a cab at the Opus Hotel (Davie and Mainland), or walk a few more blocks up Davie to catch a bus on Seymour Street or Howe Street. You can also take the pedestrian ferry to Granville Island from the foot of Davie Street.





453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

For more information on any of the topics below, visit
vancouver.ca/ourcity

- Community Amenity Contributions
- Development Cost Levies
- False Creek North Official Development Plan
- Park Board
- Public Art Program
- Southeast False Creek
- Yaletown

Other links of interest

- 2010 Winter Games www.vancouver2010.com
- Concord Pacific www.concordpacific.com
- Granville Island www.granvilleisland.com
- LEED Canada www.cagbc.org

Other self-guided tours in this series:

- Beyond Downtown on Public Transit
- Coal Harbour
- Downtown
- Downtown Eastside

Printed on recycled paper

